



Employee Spotlight: Edward Jacquez

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A quarter mile of pure adrenaline

Edward Jacquez, deputy group leader for DARHT operations, grew up in El Rancho, a rural community about 20 miles north of Santa Fe. His father, Benito, had been an avid street racer in his youth, but as he matured, he realized he needed a safer place to practice his sport, so he started traveling to the Albuquerque Dragway. He began to move up in racing classes, competing in cars with modified engines that could reach adrenaline-pumping speed. At age 15, Edward began to take over the driving duties while his father focused more on the mechanics of the cars they raced.

"I pretty much grew up in the garage and at the dragway working with my father, who taught me the concepts of engineering through the sport of drag racing," says Edward. "We pretty much share the grease that gets on our hands."

Edward Jacquez's father, Benito Jacquez, works on the family's 1963 Corvette with a 600-cubic-inch, alcohol-injected, 1,800+ horsepower engine. (Photo courtesy of Edward Jacquez)

"Today, I teach those same engineering concepts to my 10-year-old daughter, Hailee, and my three-year-old son, Ollie," Edward elaborates. "My wife is fascinated by the level of understanding my daughter has of mechanics, as she spends countless hours with me in the shop. It's also not uncommon for me to find a Hot Wheel lodged in my car's header during startup, courtesy of Ollie. It takes a tremendous amount of time to keep a car of this caliber operational, and I'm eternally grateful for the support I get from my spectacular wife, Claire, and my loving parents, Benito and Carla."

Basics of drag racing

The end goal of a basic drag race is simple: be the first to cross the finish line. Set on a race track typically one-quarter mile long, two cars wait until an electronic system of lights known as a Christmas tree signals go, at which point tires roar against the asphalt, the sweet smell of high-octane gasoline fills the air, and fans in the stands cheer as the dragsters battle for a win that takes only seconds.

Jacquez (in the Corvette, left) gets ready to throttle down against the late Elirray Trujillo at the Albuquerque Dragway. (Photo courtesy of Edward Jacquez)

Edward

In the United States, the National Hot Rod Association oversees the majority of drag-racing events. The association offers hundreds of drag-racing classes, or categories, each with its own requirements and restrictions on the types of cars allowed to participate. Drivers can opt to race professionally.

Says Edward, "One thing people don't know about drag racing is that anyone can do it. You can take your vehicle that you drive to work and race it on the track. There are racing classes for everyone. I mean, there are people who enjoy drag racing their diesel trucks—believe it or not, that is a popular class of racing, particularly here in New Mexico."

Experienced drivers like Edward have the opportunity to move up in racing classes, where the vehicles get faster and faster.

"You have to acquire specialized licenses, have a physician clear you to drive, and have under your belt a certain number of races that demonstrate you have the skills to control the vehicle you are racing," Edward explains.

Double

Barrel Photography (courtesy photo) catches Edward Jacquez seconds before executing a burnout, which helps the car's tires get better traction for the race that follows.

Street racing is not the way to go

According to *Autoweek* magazine, street racing is for chumps. Edward feels that educating the next wave of drag racers falls onto those who already do it.

"Street racing has been a big problem since the 1950s—it's a big problem now," Edward says. "I feel that as a drag racer it is partly my responsibility to engage with the fans, especially the kids. I let them sit inside the racecar, describe to them what a run is like, explain how the engine works, that sort of thing. My hope is that by doing these things the next generation knows that there is a safe alternative to street racing. I encourage parents with kids interested in drag racing to contact me or to simply attend the Albuquerque Dragway. The excitement and technology speak for themselves."

This

painting by Edward Jacquez shows a custom dragster literally tearing its way through a stylized environment.

A more contemplative pursuit

When not improving his high-powered Corvette or racing, Edward enjoys painting. Although he is often inspired by drag racing, Edward also paints images of the Southwest and its rich cultures, as well as wildlife and exaggerated figures. Edward enjoys passing on what he has learned about painting to his children.

Edward Jacquez is the deputy group leader for DARHT Operations (J-1).

Resources

- Association of professional racing teams [Real Outlaw Door Slammers](#)
- New Mexico's premier drag racing facility [Albuquerque Dragway](#)

- Showcase for Edward Jacquez's artwork [Edward Jacquez Fine Art](#)

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